

JURISDICTION : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACT : CORONERS ACT 1996
CORONER : SARAH TYLER, CORONER
HEARD : 4 MAY 2026
DELIVERED : 9 JUNE 2026
FILE NO/S : CORC 69 of 2022
DECEASED : GRAY, IAN DANIEL ARTHUR

Catchwords:

Nil

Legislation:

Nil

Counsel Appearing:

Senior Constable C Robertson appeared to assist the coroner.

Case(s) referred to in decision(s):

Nil

Coroners Act 1996
(Section 26(1))

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

I, Sarah Tyler, Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of Ian Daniel Arthur GRAY with an inquest held at Perth Coroner’s Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth, on 4 May 2026, find that the death of Ian Daniel Arthur GRAY has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was Ian Daniel Arthur GRAY and that death occurred on or shortly after 24 July 2022 in the waters of the Indian Ocean off South Bay, Green Head, Western Australia, in the following circumstances:

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION..... 3

BACKGROUND 4

LAST CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF IAN..... 6

DISCOVERY THAT IAN WAS MISSING 10

THE SEARCH FOR IAN11

 Comment Regarding Search Efforts for Ian 16

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE INVESTIGATION INTO SUSPECTED DEATH..... 17

 Discovery of Items Potentially Linked to Ian’s Boat 17

 Proof of Life Checks 20

 Western Australia Police Force Analysis 21

CONCLUSION..... 22

INTRODUCTION

1. Ian Daniel Arthur Gray (Ian) was last seen alive at about 10.45 am on 24 July 2022, when he launched his boat at the South Bay Boat Ramp, Green Head. Green Head is located on the Western Australian coastline, situated between Geraldton and Perth. Ian lived in Perth, but would regularly travel to Green Head to visit his mother, and he was very familiar with the waters off Green Head.
2. While out on his boat, Ian spoke with a friend, Victoria Broad, through Facebook Messenger. Ian sent his friend photographs of his boat, the fish he had caught, and the weather conditions he was facing. Ian last accessed his Facebook account at 3.39 pm on 24 July 2022.
3. Ian's mother became concerned when Ian did not return home in the afternoon as expected, so she and her partner went to the boat ramp where they found Ian's car and empty trailer, with no sign of Ian or his boat. They reported Ian missing to local police officers at 6.18 pm on 24 July 2022.
4. A comprehensive search of the land and sea around Green Head was conducted from 24 July 2022 to 27 July 2022, but no sign of Ian or his boat was found. The search concluded on 27 July 2022, as expert advice was provided that there was no reasonable prospect of Ian being found alive after that time.
5. A police officer from Leeman Police Station prepared a report to the State Coroner on 13 August 2025, indicating that it is the belief of the Western Australia Police Force that Ian is deceased. On the basis of the information provided by the police in relation to Ian's disappearance, the Acting State Coroner determined that pursuant to section 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), there was reasonable cause to suspect that Ian had died, and that his death was a reportable death. The Acting State Coroner made a direction on 19 March 2026 that a coroner hold an inquest into the circumstances of his suspected death.

6. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 4 May 2026. The inquest consisted of the tendering of documentary evidence compiled during the police investigation conducted into Ian's disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from Sergeant Stephen Clarke, who investigated the circumstances of Ian's disappearance, and later prepared the report for the Coroner.
7. Members of Ian's family, including his mother, father, son, sisters and other family members, all attended the inquest.¹ They provided a valuable contribution to the inquest process. It was apparent that Ian was dearly loved, and very much missed, by his family and friends.

BACKGROUND

8. Ian was 46 years old when he was last seen alive on 24 July 2022.² If he were alive today, he would be 51 years old.
9. Ian was born in Fremantle, Western Australia, on 27 July 1975, and spent his childhood years in Perth with his family. He was born to his mother, Joy Taylor, and his father, Paul Gray.³ He was the middle child of three children, with an older and a younger sister.⁴
10. When Ian was about 16 or 17 years old, his parents separated, and when Ian was 17 years old he moved out of home. He started work at a farm in Casuarina.⁵
11. Notwithstanding the separation of his parents, Ian's family remained very close, and family oriented. Ian generally had a good relationship with each of his parents, and other family members, and they all offered him support throughout some difficulties that followed in Ian's adult life.⁶
12. As a young man, Ian started to get in trouble with the law, and began using illicit drugs, including methylamphetamine. In 2000, when Ian was

¹ Transcript, p 2.

² Exhibit 1, Tab 1.

³ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 1.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 1. Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 6-7.

⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 1.

⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 2.

about 25 years old, he was imprisoned for the first time, and he was sentenced to imprisonment as an adult on a number of occasions in his life.⁷

13. Ian's whole family tried to support him throughout his time in prison and when he was released, but Ian struggled with drug dependency, and would often revert to criminal offending despite attempts to rehabilitate himself. Ian's mother explained that while she was always happy to help Ian to try to straighten out his life, she would step back from Ian when he was using methylamphetamine, as that behaviour was not how he had been raised.⁸
14. On 23 August 2020, Ian was released from custody on parole. He remained on parole at the time of his disappearance in 2022, and it appears that he was successfully complying with the requirements of his parole, including by providing urinalysis results which were negative for illicit substances.⁹ Ian's parole period would have been completed shortly after his disappearance.
15. At the time of his release from prison, Ian's whole family united around him to try to support him to get his life back on track. Ian moved in with his older sister upon his release from custody, where he stayed until October 2021 when he moved in with his younger sister.¹⁰
16. Ian's family felt that Ian's attitude to his own rehabilitation was very different at this time, and that his life was on a good path. He was focused on the future, and got a job, aiming to improve his credit and obtain a mortgage so that he could build his own home.¹¹
17. Ian had become a father in 2006¹², and he was hoping to build a home where his now teenage son could live with him. Ian's mother explained that it was very important to Ian that he try to rebuild his relationship with his son, given he had missed out on so much of his life.¹³

⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 3-4.

⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 2.

⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 1.

¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 2.

¹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 3.

¹² Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 7.

¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 3.

18. Throughout his life, Ian had a love of fishing and he had spent the last 20 years of his life out on boats. While he didn't have a Recreational Skipper's Ticket, he was highly experienced on the water.¹⁴
19. Ian enjoyed cooking the fish he caught, and he would often make fish and chips, or popcorn crayfish, for his family to enjoy.¹⁵
20. Ian was a generally fit and healthy man, with no known health difficulties. He was 183 cm tall, and slim, with blondish brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion.¹⁶

LAST CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF IAN

21. On 23 July 2022, Ian drove from Perth to Green Head to visit his mother and her partner.¹⁷
22. He travelled from his sister's house in Perth, driving to Green Head in his white Mitsubishi Triton ute, and bringing with him his boat on a trailer.
23. Ian's boat was a white, four metre Aluminium Stacer, fitted with a Johnson outboard motor, and equipped with safety equipment including flares, GPS, life jackets and a torch.¹⁸
24. That boat was registered to Ian on 16 January 2022.¹⁹ While Ian did not hold a Recreational Skipper's Ticket, he would regularly take out his boat on fishing trips, and had been boating and fishing for over 20 years. Ian loved being on his boat fishing, which was one of the main ways Ian would relax, and he always aimed to catch the biggest fish.²⁰
25. Ian arrived at his mother's house in Green Head in the evening on 23 July 2022, where she cooked him a surf and turf to celebrate his

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2.

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 4.

¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 2; Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 2.

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2. Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 1.

¹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2.

¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2.

²⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 3.

arrival.²¹ He was planning to stay with his mother for a few days, and intended to go out fishing while he was visiting.

26. Ian's mother explained that Ian was very familiar with the waters off Green Head, and that Green Head was one of his favourite places to fish. She described Ian as highly confident in his boating abilities, but said he could at times be overconfident, and he would rarely wear a life jacket.²²
27. Ian had plans to go out fishing in the morning of 24 July 2022, but he slept in. Ian's mother's partner sent Ian a message at about 8.30 am to wake him up if he wanted to go fishing. Ian flew out of bed, and complained to his mother that he hadn't been woken up earlier.²³
28. Ian's mother made him a cup of tea, and told him, "*if you want to go fishing you best go now mate.*"²⁴ That was at about 9.30 am. Ian got dressed in a fishing shirt and black shorts. He left his mother's house at some time between 9.45 am and 10.00 am in his ute, with his boat on the trailer.²⁵
29. As he was leaving, Ian called out to his mother to say goodbye, and she responded by saying goodbye, and that she loved him and would see him when he got back. She was expecting him home between 4.30 pm or 5.00 pm that day. He did not return.
30. That was the last time Ian's mother saw her son.²⁶
31. Ian drove to the Green Head General Store, where he spoke with the owner, Tammy Papos. Ms Papos was friends with Ian's mother, and knew that Ian's mother had cooked a nice meal for her son when he arrived in town. They spoke about the meal, with Ian saying his surf and turf was "*the best*" before Ian did some shopping in preparation for his day of fishing.²⁷

²¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 1. Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 1.

²² Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 3-4.

²³ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 1.

²⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 1.

²⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 1.

²⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

²⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 1-2.

32. Ian purchased a four pack of Wild Turkey bourbon cans of alcohol, along with a box of squid and a packet of octopus for bait for fishing. He paid for his purchases and left the store. Ms Papos described Ian as in “*good spirits*” that day, and described him as always smiling when he would visit the Green Head General Store.²⁸
33. Ian drove down to the South Bay boat ramp at Green Head, and readied his boat in the boat launching area. Ian completed a pre-check of the boat, and started the engine without any difficulty, so Ian reversed his ute and trailer into the water, unhooking his boat, before parking his ute in the car park.²⁹
34. Two Green Head locals, Robert Bertram³⁰, and Howard Grinsell³¹, saw Ian around this time, readying his boat to go out for the day. Both of the locals had boating and fishing experience, and they each described the conditions on the water that day as rough and windy. The weather was described as blowing a gale with swells of five to six metres.³² Both men expressed the view that they wouldn’t have gone out on the water that day.³³
35. Ian launched his boat and set off for a day of fishing, but at around 10.45 am, he was still in South Bay, near the South Bay Lookout, about 50 to 100 metres off shore. He was having some difficulties with his boat motor, which was stopping and starting.³⁴
36. Loretta Higgins, another Green Head local, was out for a walk with her child, and she saw Ian’s boat at that time. Ian stopped his boat about 50 metres offshore, and lifted his engine to remove seaweed from his propellor. Ms Higgins thought Ian appeared frustrated with his engine troubles, and seemed in a rushed or agitated state, as he removed the weed quickly, and then took off out to sea at full speed, heading south-west towards the north side of Fisherman’s Island.³⁵

²⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 1-2.

²⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 9, p 1.

³⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

³¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

³² Exhibit 1, Tab 8, p 1.

³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 8, p 1. Exhibit 1, Tab 9, p 2.

³⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 8, p 1-2.

³⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 11, p 1-2.

37. It seems that Ian's fishing trip had been delayed by his sleep in, possible boat motor trouble, and seaweed becoming entangled in his propellor, and it appears that he was eager to get out to begin his day of fishing, particularly before the conditions worsened any further.
38. Ms Higgins could hear Ian's boat hull slamming on the water as it went over the waves, as the swell was high. Ms Higgins last saw Ian's boat passing Fisherman's Island.³⁶
39. Ian's boat was last observed at about 11.00 am to 11.30 am by Mr Grinsell, one of the Green Head locals who had also observed Ian setting off that morning, and having the above difficulties with his boat, from his home overlooking the ocean. Mr Grinsell saw Ian's boat heading out to sea.³⁷
40. Mr Grinsell explained³⁸:
- It looked really bad out there still. I thought again who would be out in that weather and at sea.
- I've been on boats for 35 to 40 years and I wouldn't have gone out on that day.
41. This is the last known sighting of Ian's boat.
42. Ian headed out to sea and started fishing. At 12.32 pm, Ian sent a message on Facebook Messenger to his friend Ms Broad, with a picture of a fish that he had caught. He told her it was the first fish he'd caught that day. Ian told Ms Broad that the fish was a Baldchin Groper, which is an excellent eating fish.³⁹
43. Ian had reconnected with Ms Broad in recent times. They had met many years earlier through mutual friends, but they had fallen out of touch due to Ian's lifestyle choices. They had reconnected after Ms Broad became

³⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 11, p 2.

³⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 8, p 2.

³⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 8, p 2.

³⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 6, p 1. Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 1-2.

aware that Ian had changed his lifestyle and wasn't associating with negative influences any longer.⁴⁰

44. Ian also sent Ms Broad a photograph of the water from the side of his boat, and when Ms Broad asked Ian if the water was a bit choppy, he replied that it was "*very hard work*".⁴¹
45. At 12.49 pm, Ian told Ms Broad he'd just caught his second fish, and sent a photograph of another Baldchin Groper, at 12.50 pm.⁴²
46. At 12.54 pm, Ian sent Ms Broad a photograph of the back of his boat, with the ocean in the background, and a can of Wild Turkey bourbon sitting on an esky in front of him. He described it as "*good living*"⁴³, and was clearly at that time enjoying his day of fishing as planned, in no distress.
47. Ian's conversation with Ms Broad over Facebook Messenger continued, and they settled plans to spend time together later in the week. Ian's last message to Ms Broad was at 3.17 pm, which was simply responding to confirm their plans.⁴⁴
48. This is the last known conversation Ian had with any person.
49. Ian's Facebook account was last accessed at 3.39 pm on 24 July 2022. Messages sent by Ms Broad at 3.51 pm, and after that, were never read by Ian, and he did not respond to her subsequent Facebook Messenger calls.⁴⁵

DISCOVERY THAT IAN WAS MISSING

50. Ian was expected home by his mother by around 4.30 pm or 5.00 pm. At about 5.15 pm, Ian's mother had become very worried for Ian's welfare, as he hadn't returned as expected.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 6, p 1.

⁴¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 3-4.

⁴² Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 8-9.

⁴³ Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 10.

⁴⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 14-15.

⁴⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3. Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 15.

⁴⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 3.

51. Ian's mother telephoned her daughters to check whether they had heard anything, while her partner raised the alarm with sea rescue.⁴⁷
52. At around the same time, a concerned member of the public went to the Green Head General Store, and spoke with Ms Papos to ask if she had sold bait to anyone that day. The member of the public said that there was a white ute and a trailer still at the South Bay boat ramp, and that was very unusual for the time of day.⁴⁸
53. Ms Papos was concerned for Ian's welfare, and was about to go to see Ian's mother to check whether Ian had returned when she saw Ian's mother drive past the shop towards the Green Head lookout.⁴⁹
54. Ms Papos closed the store, and went to the lookout, where Ian's mother confirmed he hadn't returned home.⁵⁰
55. Ian was formally reported missing to police at 6.18 pm, and an extensive, multi-agency Marine and Land Search and Rescue operation was immediately commenced.⁵¹

THE SEARCH FOR IAN

56. The weather forecast for the coastal waters near Green Head for the afternoon and evening of 24 July 2022 forecast south to southeasterly winds of about 10 knots, and swell of four to six metres.⁵²
57. Extensive searches were immediately undertaken, but the lack of any specific last known location (such as GPS coordinates) to search, nightfall, and the poor weather conditions, made the search for Ian a very difficult undertaking.
58. At 6.31 pm, the Leeman Volunteer Marine Rescue vessel the Abbey Lee was tasked to search for Ian in the vicinity of Fisherman's Island.⁵³ The

⁴⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 5, p 3.

⁴⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 2.

⁴⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 2.

⁵⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 7, p 2.

⁵¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3. Exhibit 1, Tab 13, p 1.

⁵² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3. Exhibit 1, Tab 17. Exhibit 1, Tab 18.

⁵³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3.

vessel arrived by 7.24 pm, but the conditions were too rough to get close to the island, due to the five metre swells.⁵⁴

59. In the meantime, the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, based in Canberra, were advised of the situation, and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority's Search and Rescue jet aircraft was asked to search the Green Head area for Ian, which was approved, but would take some time to arrive. That jet arrived at about 10.00 pm, and conducted an extensive air search for Ian, without success.⁵⁵
60. The Western Australia Police Force Airwing was also asked to deploy from Perth to the area to assist with the search, and the police helicopter arrived at 9.22 pm and immediately began searching for Ian, searching until 12.10 am on 25 July 2022, until it needed to return to Perth.⁵⁶
61. Attempts were made to call Ian's phone without success, and a phone triangulation was approved to try to narrow down Ian's whereabouts, and therefore the search area. Those enquires established that Ian's mobile phone was last in between the Green Head and Leeman exchange towers until it was either turned off, or lost battery power, at 3.46 pm on 24 July 2022. As a result, the mobile phone enquiries were unable to identify a narrower search area, and Ian's mobile phone never reconnected with any exchange towers after that time.⁵⁷
62. A shoreline search was conducted in case Ian had come ashore and had been unable to seek assistance, or in the event that his boat was able to be spotted from the shore.⁵⁸
63. The police spoke with Ian's mother, who explained that Ian would generally follow the navigation markers (leads) from the South Bay boat ramp, until he reached the 20 metre depth, and would then fish along that contour south to Fisherman's Island.⁵⁹ This information assisted in planning the search pattern, but Ian's last known position could not be determined, so the search area remained vast.

⁵⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 4.

⁵⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3-5.

⁵⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3-6.

⁵⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3-4.

⁵⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 4.

⁵⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 5.

64. An opinion was obtained from a survival specialist, Dr Paul Luckin, at 1.03 pm on 25 July 2022, to consider Ian's prospects of survival in the water. Dr Luckin expressed the opinion that the only real hope of Ian still being alive was if he was adrift in his boat having suffered some kind of medical episode, or some kind of mechanical failure.
65. Dr Luckin advised that Ian would not have survived longer than a maximum of six to eight hours in the water, even if he was wearing a life jacket, had he fallen overboard. This estimation was based upon Ian's body mass index, the water temperature (which was between 18 to 20 degrees Celsius), the low air temperature (which was 13 degrees Celsius, not taking into account wind chill), the impact of nightfall on temperature, the extreme swell, and Ian's likely fatigue and dehydration.
66. Dr Luckin concluded that there was no realistic prospect that Ian would survive beyond the end of daylight on Wednesday, 27 July 2022 in either of the above two circumstances, and any search beyond that would be a search to recover Ian's body, if that was at all possible.⁶⁰
67. With those timeframes in mind, the search focused upon where Ian may be based upon drift modelling, based on two scenarios. The first was a search area on the basis that Ian had remained adrift on the vessel, which spread the possible search area as far south as Cervantes, and the second was a separate search location on the basis that Ian's boat had become submerged, and he was adrift in the ocean, which limited the possible search area to the Green Head and Jurien Bay area.⁶¹
68. This modelling helped the search coordinators to set search parameters, and to ensure that search resources including air, land and sea resources were deployed to appropriate locations, with the greatest likelihood of finding Ian.
69. Over the course of four days, from when Ian was first reported missing on 24 July 2022, until the search came to an end on 27 July 2022, an extensive and comprehensive search was undertaken for Ian, with the

⁶⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 9. Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 6-7.

⁶¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 9.

assistance of various agencies and members of the local community, without success.

70. Some of the resources called upon to assist in the search, noting that this list is not exhaustive, were⁶²:
- a. The Western Australia Police Force, including regional police stations, Water Police, Mounted Police, Air Wing and others;
 - b. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority, including the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre;
 - c. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services;
 - d. The Leeman Volunteer Marine Rescue; and
 - e. The State Emergency Service (SES) with teams arriving from Geraldton, Eneabba and Kalbarri.
71. In the morning of 25 July 2022, the Water Police issued a radio message to all vessels in the area, and potential rescuers, to advise them that Ian was missing, and to keep an eye out for his vessel,⁶³ so in addition to formal searchers, many other vessels in the area kept a lookout in the hope of finding Ian.
72. The search utilised six rotary aircraft in addition to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority rescue jet, to cover as much distance as possible in the search for Ian.⁶⁴
73. The area identified by Ian's family as the area he was likely to have gone fishing was also reviewed for suitability for a sea vessel to search, but the area was hazardous to search vessels due to the large breaking waves, and as a result, the aircraft were instead tasked with searching that area.⁶⁵
74. At the same time, a local fisheries officer from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, who have responsibilities for aquatic resources, became aware of the search for Ian, and volunteered the use of a vessel and other resources to search for Ian. They, along with

⁶² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 3-14. Exhibit 1, Tab 3. Exhibit 1, Tab 13, p 18-25. Exhibit 1, Tab 14. Exhibit 1, Tab 15. Exhibit 1, Tab 16.

⁶³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 8.

⁶⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 8.

⁶⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 8-9. Exhibit 1, Tab 14, p 1.

Volunteer Marine Rescue vessels, searched the area north of Fisherman's Island, and to the western side of the islands.⁶⁶

75. State Emergency Services volunteers, and other police resources, continued other searches without success, while arrangements were made for an additional three marine vessels from the police force to be deployed in the search.⁶⁷
76. At 5.00 pm on 25 July 2022, the search for Ian was suspended due to deteriorating sea conditions, and oncoming sunset, with a plan for searching to recommence at 7.00 am on 26 July 2022.⁶⁸ As a result, search routes for both aerial and marine resources were planned overnight for the coming day, so that the greatest area could be searched in the time that was left.
77. On 26 July 2022, the Mounted Police were deployed to search the beaches along the coast to Jurien Bay, in the hope that Ian had come ashore. Remote drone operators departed Perth to undertake drone searches, and arrived by 1.40 pm, where flyovers of Green Head and Leeman began in search of any sign of Ian.⁶⁹
78. Land, sea and aerial searches continued until 5.00 pm, where the search was again suspended overnight, to resume in the morning of 27 July 2022.⁷⁰
79. Sadly, despite further efforts on 27 July 2022, including vessels continuing to search the area around Fisherman's Island, drone operators conducting flights over the waters around Green Head, and other searches, no sign of Ian was found.
80. By 11.37 am, people undertaking searches out on the water were reporting that ocean conditions were worsening, and were not favourable for a search, and in light of the advice from Dr Luckin as to the prospect of

⁶⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 5.

⁶⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 10.

⁶⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 10.

⁶⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 10-11. Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 11-14.

⁷⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 14.

Ian's survival at sea for an extended timeframe, discussions turned to whether it was time to bring the search to an end.⁷¹

81. By 5.00 pm on 27 July 2022, the extensive searches undertaken to try to locate Ian had found nothing of significance, and a decision was made by the Police Commander that the search should be terminated.⁷²

82. The reasons provided for terminating the search by that time were that⁷³:

- a. Dr Luckin's estimated timeframe for survival had expired;
- b. the search had extended over four days without success;
- c. the area searched extended over 3900 square nautical miles, by air, sea and land, which had included an expansion from Leeman to Guilderton and approximately 50 nautical miles out to sea, without locating Ian; and
- d. extensive shoreline searches by the police, the State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers, the mounted police, and police drone pilots, had been undertaken without success.

83. The recommendation of the Police Commander was considered by the Forward Commander for the search on behalf of the Western Australia Police Force, Senior Constable Byrne. Senior Constable Byrne explained to Ian's family the reasons why it was likely a decision would be made to terminate the search, and after those discussions, with the agreement of Ian's family, he endorsed the decision of the Police Commander to terminate the search, for the reasons that had been provided.⁷⁴ Following that agreement, the Police Commander confirmed that the search for Ian had come to an end.⁷⁵

Comment Regarding Search Efforts for Ian

⁷¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 14.

⁷² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 14.

⁷³ Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 18.

⁷⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 18.

⁷⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 14. Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 18.

84. In the course of this inquest, I have considered the quality of the search efforts for Ian, on the part of both the Western Australia Police Force, but also the very many other agencies involved in the search.
85. It is important to acknowledge the comprehensive, professional, and thorough response of the Western Australia Police Force, and all other agencies who swiftly responded to the call for assistance between 24 July 2022 and 27 July 2022 to try to locate Ian.
86. I am satisfied that the search efforts were of a very high standard.
87. It is clear that every possible resource that could be called upon to try to find Ian was called upon, and that diligent efforts were made by all involved to try to find, and render assistance, to Ian before it was too late.
88. I understand that Ian's family endorse my comments regarding the quality of the search efforts for Ian.⁷⁶
89. While the search was not successful in locating Ian, Ian's family expressed their appreciation for the extensive efforts of all involved in the search to try to find him, and I hope they are able to take some small comfort from the knowledge that every effort to find Ian was undertaken before the search drew to a close.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE INVESTIGATION INTO
SUSPECTED DEATH**

90. After the termination of the search, the investigation into Ian's disappearance, and suspected death, then became the responsibility of the Leeman Police, as a coronial investigation.

Discovery of Items Potentially Linked to Ian's Boat

91. During the course of that investigation, a number of items have been located, which police investigators suspect may be linked to Ian's boat.

⁷⁶ Transcript, p 21.

92. Those items are as follows:

a. On 4 August 2022, a red fuel container was found near Booker Bay, in Jurien Bay.⁷⁷

93. Sergeant Clarke explained that this type of container, while consistent with a red fuel container photographed by Ian, and sent to Ms Broad on the day Ian disappeared, is an extremely common brand, and would be found on most marine vessels.⁷⁸

94. As a result, while it is possible the container is debris from Ian's boat, it is also possible that the container has fallen from a vessel entirely unrelated to Ian's boat, and cannot be conclusively linked to Ian's boat.

95. Sergeant Clarke confirmed at the inquest that due to the container's exposure to the elements, forensic analysis of the container was not viable.⁷⁹

96. I note that Booker Bay, in Jurien Bay, is in the drift pattern expected by those searching for Ian, which adds some support for the possibility that the container came from Ian's vessel.⁸⁰

a. On 5 September 2022, a piece of grey marine flooring was located at sea in the area of Ian's disappearance.⁸¹

97. Sergeant Clarke explained that this piece of marine flooring was located floating in the ocean near Kangaroo Point, near Cervantes.⁸²

98. While this marine flooring was consistent with flooring photographed in Ian's boat, it is again a very common type of marine flooring for boats, and Sergeant Clarke confirmed that there was nothing unique about it.

⁷⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 15.

⁷⁸ Transcript, p 16.

⁷⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 15; Transcript, p 16.

⁸⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 9. Transcript, p 16.

⁸¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 10.2, p 1.

⁸² Transcript, p 16.

Given this type of flooring is commonplace in marine vessels, the flooring cannot be conclusively linked to Ian's boat.⁸³

99. Sergeant Clarke again confirmed at the inquest that due to the piece of flooring's exposure to the elements, forensic analysis was not viable.⁸⁴
100. As a result, while again, it is possible that this piece of flooring is debris from Ian's boat, there are many other reasons why common marine flooring may have been found floating in the sea in this area.
101. Again, I note that Kangaroo Point, near Cervantes, is in the drift pattern expected by those searching for Ian, which adds some support for the possibility the flooring is debris from Ian's vessel.⁸⁵
 - a. On 9 September 2022, a second piece of grey marine flooring was located at sea in the area of Ian's disappearance.⁸⁶
102. Sergeant Clarke explained that this further piece of marine flooring was also located floating in the ocean near Kangaroo Point, near Cervantes, in the same area as the first.⁸⁷
103. Again, this flooring was consistent with flooring photographed in Ian's boat, and had been found in the drift pattern expected by those searching for Ian. This also adds support for the possibility the flooring is debris from Ian's vessel.⁸⁸
104. Once again, Sergeant Clarke again confirmed at the inquest that due to the piece of flooring's exposure to the elements, forensic analysis was not viable.⁸⁹
105. The significance of these items is considered further below.

⁸³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 16.

⁸⁴ Transcript, p 16.

⁸⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 9; Transcript, p 16.

⁸⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 10.1, p 1.

⁸⁷ Transcript, p 16.

⁸⁸ Transcript, p 16.

⁸⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 16. Transcript, p 16.

Proof of Life Checks

106. As part of the police investigation into Ian's disappearance, enquiries were made with a number of agencies and other institutions across Australia to see whether there is any record of contact with Ian after he was last known to be alive, or whether there was any record which would otherwise suggest that Ian is still alive.
107. At the conclusion of those investigations, it was apparent that there was no evidence to suggest that Ian was still alive.
108. Enquiries with the Australian Border Force confirmed that Ian is recorded as being 'onshore'⁹⁰ within Australia, and there are no records to otherwise suggest that he had left the country through any legitimate means.
109. Searches of the following databases have revealed no new records for Ian after his disappearance in July 2022⁹¹:

Western Australia Police Force
Electoral Roll
Centrelink
Medicare
Immigration
Proof of life enquiries with all other states and territories
Births Deaths and Marriages for all other states and territories
Banking institutions

110. Further, a check of DNA profiles held in relation to currently known unidentified human remains did not identify any matches to Ian's DNA. Ian's DNA profile will remain on the DNA database and will be checked against any unidentified human remains recovered in Australia.⁹²
111. These enquiries establish that Ian has not had contact with any of the government agencies one would expect a person to make contact with in their day-to-day life, since his disappearance in July 2022.

⁹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 13, p 12.

⁹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 14. Transcript, p 14-15.

⁹² Exhibit 1, Tab 13, p 7. Transcript, p 17.

Western Australia Police Force Analysis

112. Sergeant Clarke, the Officer in Charge of the Leeman Police Station, undertook the coronial investigation into Ian's suspected death, and authored a report to the coroner regarding the circumstances of Ian's suspected death.⁹³
113. Sergeant Clarke's analysis of the evidence confirmed that there was no evidence of any criminality, or the unlawful involvement of another person in connection with Ian's disappearance.⁹⁴
114. The police officers involved in the initial search and rescue efforts following Ian's disappearance, including Senior Constable Byrne, as the Forward Commander during the search, believed that Ian's vessel had become submerged, for unknown reasons, resulting in Ian's death.⁹⁵
115. At the conclusion of the coronial investigation, Sergeant Clarke agreed with the conclusions of Senior Constable Byrne. He concluded that the most likely explanation was that Ian entered the water between 3.30 pm and 4.00 pm on 24 July 2022, and from that point, could have survived at most for eight hours, based upon Dr Luckin's expert advice, until midnight that night.⁹⁶
116. Sergeant Clarke noted that the weather conditions were very unfavourable for fishing or boating on 24 July 2022, and in the days that followed, and the container and pieces of marine flooring found in the months following Ian's disappearance supported the possibility that Ian's boat either came apart, or overturned, in the rough weather.⁹⁷
117. Ian was an experienced fisherman, with a great familiarity with boats, but he was not an accomplished swimmer, and he was not someone who would generally use safety equipment such as life jackets when out on a

⁹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

⁹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 17.

⁹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 17-18. Exhibit 1, Tab 3, p 18-19.

⁹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 17-18. Transcript, p 17.

⁹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 17-18.

fishing trip.⁹⁸ Ian had previously told his mother that if he ever fell out of his boat, he didn't think he'd make it.⁹⁹

118. In light of these factors, Sergeant Clarke concluded that the most likely explanation for Ian's disappearance is that he entered the water, likely due to his boat becoming submerged in rough seas and difficult conditions, and that he died soon after becoming immersed in water.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

119. Having carefully considered the evidence within the coronial brief, carefully listened to the evidence of Sergeant Clarke at the inquest, and taking into account the views of Ian's family, I am satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that Ian is no longer alive.
120. I find that his death has been established beyond all reasonable doubt.
121. I am satisfied that Ian died on or about 24 July 2022, which is the day he was last seen after launching his boat from South Bay in Green Head. If he had been alive and well at the end of the day, I am satisfied he would have returned to the boat ramp, and to his mother's home, where she was expecting his arrival.
122. Further, there has been no sign of Ian in the now almost four years that he has been missing. Ian has not contacted any of his family members or friends in that time, and I am satisfied that he would not willingly do that to his mother, who loved her son and desperately wishes to lay him to rest, or to any of his other family members, including his son.
123. In all of the circumstances of this case, I consider that it is most likely that Ian died as a result of drowning, when he became immersed in the waters of the Indian Ocean off South Bay, Green Head.
124. I have carefully considered whether the available evidence allows me to make a formal finding as to the cause and the manner of Ian's death.

⁹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2. Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 4.

⁹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 2. Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 4.

¹⁰⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 18. Transcript, p 17.

125. I have considered whether it is possible that Ian suffered some form of unexpected medical episode, which resulted in him collapsing in his boat, and the boat drifting out to sea, or his boat becoming submerged, because Ian's medical status meant there was no sailor at the helm. This possibility would raise the prospect that Ian's death was due to natural causes.
126. Ian was 47 years old at the time of his disappearance, which is not young, and Ian had in the past been a heavy user of methylamphetamine,¹⁰¹ which may leave a person more vulnerable to health issues such as a cardiac event or unexpected arrhythmia. This might result in a person collapsing and either dying immediately from a cardiac event, or possibly accidentally ending up in the water.
127. However, Ian had spent the final years of his life working hard to rehabilitate himself, and there is no suggestion that Ian had returned to the use of illicit substances around the time of his disappearance. While Ian did drink alcohol, as evidenced by the presence of cans of Wild Turkey bourbon in his vessel that day¹⁰², there is no suggestion that his alcohol consumption was such that it had adversely affected his health, or that he had consumed alcohol to excess on the day of his disappearance.
128. Ian's family have explained that Ian suffered no known medical conditions, and was generally fit and healthy.
129. On that basis, there is no evidence in support of the possibility of a medical collapse being the underlying cause of Ian's disappearance, and while it remains a remote possibility, I am satisfied it is significantly less likely than the alternative.
130. The other option is that Ian's boat either came apart as a result of being swamped by waves, or he lost control of his boat and overturned in rough seas, resulting in his immersion in the ocean, and accidental death.

¹⁰¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 4, p 2. Exhibit 1, Tab 12, p 2.

¹⁰² Exhibit 1, Tab 20, p 10.

131. I am satisfied this is a far more likely option, in light of¹⁰³:
- a. the weather conditions at the time, which were cold and windy, and unsuitable for boating or fishing;
 - b. the four to six metre swells in the area Ian was known to fish;
 - c. Ian's messages to Ms Broad indicating that the conditions were "*very hard work*";
 - d. the fact that Ian's boat was small, and was therefore vulnerable to being overwhelmed by waves in rough seas;
 - e. the evidence that Ian seemed to be having trouble with his boat engine, which may have been due to seaweed in the propellor, or other engine troubles;
 - f. Ian's poor swimming ability, and tendency not to use lifesaving items such as life jackets when out on the water; and
 - g. the debris located in the months after Ian's disappearance, which while not definitive, do suggest that Ian's boat has come apart, or overturned in rough seas.
132. Given that Ian's body has never been found, I am somewhat limited in the findings I am able to make on the evidence presently available.
133. I am satisfied, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Ian is now deceased.
134. I am satisfied that Ian's death was likely due to drowning, but it is also possible that in rough seas, he suffered injuries that contributed to his death. Accordingly, the cause of death must be unascertained.
135. However, even without a definitive cause of death, I am satisfied that the known circumstances are sufficient for me to find the manner of Ian's death.
136. I find that Ian's death occurred by way of accident.
137. As explained above, this finding is consistent with the views of the investigating police officers, and the views of Ian's family.

¹⁰³. Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p 17-18. Exhibit 1, Tab 17. Exhibit 1, Tab 20. Exhibit 1, Tab 8. Exhibit 1, Tab 4. Exhibit 1, Tab 10.1. Exhibit 1, Tab 10.2.

138. On the evidence available before me, it is clear that Ian had a genuine love of the ocean, and of fishing in particular, and that he died while out on the ocean doing what he loved.
139. It is a great tragedy that Ian died so soon after he had made significant strides in getting his life back on track, and was working on rebuilding trust and relationships with his family, and his son, after years of difficulties associated with Ian's substance abuse and offending behaviour.
140. Having said that, I hope that Ian's loved ones hold that time that they had with Ian in the final years of his life closely, and find some small measure of consolation in the knowledge that Ian died after he spent a day catching fish out on his boat, which was one of his great pleasures in life, secure in the knowledge that he had a loving family supporting him with his goals for the future.
141. It is clear that there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death, and it appears that he died doing what he loved.
142. Ian's disappearance, and death at sea, provides a tragic reminder for all avid fishermen and boat users of the importance of safety devices, such as life jackets, GPS locators, marine radios, and emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), or personal locator beacons (PLBs), when things go wrong.
143. While Ian carried a life jacket, he was known to not use it, and he did not carry items such as a PLB when he went out on the water.
144. It is not enough to simply have safety devices like life jackets, they must be worn. We cannot know whether Ian had the opportunity to use the limited safety devices he carried, such as his life jacket, or flares, when he found himself in distress, but the evidence suggests that he would not have had that opportunity.
145. However, safety is an essential consideration before heading out onto the water. The importance of knowing where to search when a person does not return at an expected time cannot be overstated, and a relatively cost

effective item such as a PLB, can make all the difference when a person in need of assistance is lost at sea.

146. I would encourage everyone heading out on the water to consider the benefits of carrying such devices. It is better to prepare for the worst, and never have a need of this safety equipment, than to be unprepared in the face of an emergency.

147. As I did at the inquest, I wish to convey to Ian's family and friends, on behalf of the Court, my sincere condolences for their loss.

S. Tyler
Coroner
9 June 2026